

August 18, 2006

To: Regional Transportation Commission

From: The City of Kent

Under the current systems of transportation governance, what works:

Policy Boards such as SCATBD, ETP and Sea Shore work but they could work better, particularly with projects or goals that cross "subarea lines". The Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) and Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) work very well. The FAST Partnership (Freight Action Strategy for Seattle Tacoma) works very well.

what doesn't work:

Transportation governance without transportation funding options to replace our deteriorated street surfaces doesn't work. Regional traffic including freight, literally pounds our local streets and arterials to pieces because of traffic avoiding the overcongested state freeways. The drivers are looking for a lane where they can actually move faster than "stop and go" so more traffic ends up using city streets and arterials as an attempt to bypass the freeways. These systems also become clogged but the local governments have no funds available to repair these same streets. Unfortunately, there are bad examples everywhere. Having a regional plan that precludes local street funding is not good. Having local streets options without a regional plan is equally not good.

What regional governance structures should the RTC consider?

The area does not need an additional governance structure. What it does need are more funding sources or options. The RTID Board structure has worked – it just never received sufficient tools to get a package to the ballot.

What are the biggest challenges to effective regional governance and what criteria and impacts might the RTC use to evaluate potential governance:

The biggest challenge is developing public awareness of the link between the public funds needed (transportation taxes) and the magnitude of the dollars needed for solutions. Since the overwhelming majority of the population is concentrated in the cities, we believe the best source of disseminating this information is through the cities, city government and local media outlets. Each year the public is barraged with misleading information in the latest initiative campaign that could eliminate the same revenue source that might help alleviate the problems. State and local governments in the past have not performed adequately in informing the public. Public information made available with respect to Initiative 912 in 2005 has demonstrated some improvement in this area however.

What impacts do you predict for your agency if a new regional entity assumed some of the local transit and transportation responsibilities in the region?

We believe transportation solutions would slow down as a new layer is unnecessary. There is a desperate need to get an RTID type package to the voters to vote on. Four years have gone by and we still have not presented a regional solution to the voters. We believe the cities and counties can effectively continue with local arterial and street programs if given a source of potential revenue funds, but that will not solve the regional issues with the freeway and Transit system. An RTID type regional package is needed.

How does your agency finance its transportation/transit activities?

Kent has formed partnerships via LID's with the private sector in most of our new transportation projects; as an example, our \$60 million 196th Street Corridor project included \$28 million in private (LID) funds, \$18 million came from the State TIB and the balance from City and County funds. In general a smaller percentage comes from federal funds with is a more intermittent source for our transportation projects. However the needs, particularly for street replacement funds are not being met and each year pavement deficiencies climb higher.

What financial issues should the RTC consider in recommending ... to the Legislature.

The RTC should include sustainable revenue sources for the cities & counties to complement a regional plan so that the two will not be exclusive of each other financially.